

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6597

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 0139

NODIS

FOR UNDER SECRETARY SISCO AND NEA ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MASS, PFOR, JO, US, UR

SUBJECT: HEAVY-LIFT HELICOPTERS FOR JORDAN

REF: AMMAN 0090, STATE 006715

1. KING RAISED WITH ME JANUARY 10 SOVIET HEAVY-LIFT HELICOPTER DEAL. UNFORTUNATELY DEPARTMENT'S TELEGRAM ARRIVED AFTER OUR MEETING AND I DID NOT HAVE BENEFIT OF INSTRUCTIONS.

2. KING EXPLAINED IN TERMS WHICH ARE ALREADY FAMILIAR TO YOU FACT THAT SOVIETS DURING HAWK CONSIDERATION HAD OFFERED JORDAN A NUMBER OF TIMES TO PROVIDE MISSILES. WHEN US ARRANGEMENT HAD WORKED OUT THEY HAD ASKED AGAIN WHAT JORDAN WOULD LIKE, AND WHILE IT IS NOT CLEAR FROM WHAT KING TOLD ME WHO TOOK INITIATIVE, EARLIER REPORTING INDICATED JORDAN TOOK INITIATIVE TO SUGGEST AN INTEREST IN HEAFY-LIFT HELICOPTERS. KING SAID THEY HAD HEARD NO MORE FROM SOVIETS UNTIL RECENT DELEGATION VISIT IN LATE DECEMBER. THEN SOVIETS HAD SAID THAT A NUMBER OF SUCH HELICOPTERS HAD BEEN EARMARKED FOR PRODUCTION FOR JORDAN. KING SAID HE IS NOT SURE WHETHER THEY ARE TO BE A GIFT OR TO BE SOLD TO JORDAN ON CONCESSIONAL TERMS, ETC. HE BELIEVES THEY HAVE OFFERED MI-8 HELICOPTERS WHILE HE WOULD PREFER MI-6. HE WILL BE SENDING A

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DELEGATION TO EXAMINE WITH THE SOVIETS THE NATURE OF

THEIR PROPOSAL AND TO REVIEW DETAILS OF THE EQUIPMENT.
HE MAY EVEN SEND CHIEF OF AIR FORCE BRIGADIER ABOUD
SALIM TO LOOK AT SOVIET OFFER. BUT HE WOULD BE DOING
THIS IN A VERY QUIET AND LOW KEY MANNER.

3. BY WAY OF BACKGROUND, KING ADDED THAT HE HAD BEEN
REVIEWING THIS PROBLEM FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. HE WANTED
A CAPABILITY TO LIFT ONE BATTALION OF HIS SPECIAL FORCES.
HE ALSO WANTED HELICOPTERS FOR IN-COUNTRY CIVIL TASKS
AND DEVELOPMENT RELATED TRANSPORTATION. HE HAD TALKED
WITH US FIRMS ABOUT BUYING THE HELICOPTERS AND WAS TOLD
HE COULD GET THEM MORE RAPIDLY IF HE WENT BY THE
COMMERCIAL ROUTE. HOWEVER, THE PRICE FOR 20 TO 24
WAS NEARLY \$120 MILLION. HE HAD CONSIDERED APPROACH-
ING THE SAUDIS FOR THE FUNDS, BUT NOW THE SAUDIS WERE
BEING VERY SLOW ABOUT FUNDING HAWK AND VULCAN AND HE DID
NOT FEEL HE COULD PRESS FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDS FROM THEM
FOR SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT.

4. HE ADDED THAT THE PRESENT STEP WAS ONLY EXPLORATORY
AND HE HAD MADE NO DECISION YET SINCE HE DID NOT EVEN
KNOW THE DETAILS OF THE SOVIET OFFER. HE WOULD LOOK INTO
SOVIET AVIONICS WHICH MIGHT NOT BE COMPATIBLE WITH
HIS OWN. EVEN IF THE HELICOPTERS WERE A GIFT, HE
MIGHT WELL WISH TO BUY US AVIONIC EQUIPMENT.

5. FINALLY HE NOTED THAT THE SOVIETS OVER THE YEARS
HAD CONTINUED TO PRESS JORDAN ON MILITARY SUPPLY. HE
HAD CONTINUED TO REFUSE THEIR OFFERS. THE PRESENT
EQUIPMENT, SINCE IT WAS NOT MISSILES, TANKS OR GUNS,
MIGHT BE A USEFUL WAY TO ESTABLISH SOME SORT OF BALANCE.
AT LEAST THIS WAS A CONSIDERATION WHICH HE HAD TO KEEP
IN MIND.

6. IN REPLY I TOLD THE KING THAT I HAD BEEN INFORMED AS
HE HAD REQUESTED OF HIS INTEREST. I HAD RECEIVED NO
REACTION YET FROM WASHINGTON AND THEREFORE COULD ONLY
GIVE HIM MY PERSONAL FEELINGS. I SAID I THOUGHT THERE
WERE A NUMBER OF POINTS WHICH HE SHOULD AND WOULD WANT
TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT. I SAID SPEAKING DIRECTLY AND
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FRANKLY HE SHOULD KNOW THAT THE US CONGRESS AND PUBLIC
WOULD FIND IT HARD TO UNDERSTAND WHY HE HAD MOVED TO
ACCEPT SOVIET EQUIPMENT, EVEN IF IT WERE A SOVIET GIFT.
IF IT WERE COMING ON SUCH TERMS, THEN PERHAPS WE SHOULD LOOK
JOINTLY AT SCHEDULING SOME SUCH EQUIPMENT
FOR OUR GRANT OR CREDIT PROGRAMS TO JORDAN.
IF IT WERE A PURCHASE, THEN WE HOPED THAT OUR
LONG STANDING RELATIONSHIP WOULD LEAD HIM TO CONSIDER

FAVORABLY A COMPARABLE US OFFER. IN ANY EVENT, THERE WERE A NUMBER OF LONG STANDING PROGRAMS THE IMPACT ON WHICH OF A SOVIET ARMS RELATIONSHIP I COULD NOT PRECISELY PREDIV BUT IT WOULD BE NAGATIVE. THESE INCLUDED REGULAR PROGRAMS OF ASSISTANCE AS WELL AS THE HAWK PURCHASE AND SPECIFICALLY OUR REGULAR MILITARY AID RELATIONS.

7. IN ADDITION, I WAS NOT SURE THAT HIS SAUDI FRIENDS WOULD FIND THIS A CONGENIAL STEP. THEY HAD COMPLAINED TO HIM ABOUT IRAQI ACTIVITIES IN THE PORT OF AQABA. SUCH COMPLAINTS TO ME INDICATED A POTENTIALLY SERIOUS SENSITIVITY ON THEIR PART ABOUT POSSIBLE SOVIET WEAPONS AND OTHER SUCH ASSISTANCE TO JORDAN. I WAS SURE KING WOULD TAKE THIS INTO ACCOUNT AND IT MIGHT EVEN BECOME A USEFUL FACTOR IN FUTURE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SAUDIS ABOUT THE PROBLEM. IN ANY EVENT, IT WAS TO ME ALSO AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION.

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FOR UNDER SECRETARY SISCO AND NEA ATHERTON

8. THE THIRD POINT WAS THE FACT THAT THE US HAD NEVER BEEN APPROACHED BY JORDAN EXCEPT FOR COMMERCIAL PROCUREMENT. IF HE WERE INTERESTED, I SAID I BELIEVED THE EMBASSY COULD SEEK A WASHINGTON REACTION TO A FMS PURCHASE. I KNEW THAT HE HAD FELT THE PAYMENT TERMS FOR THE COMMERCIAL CONTRACTOR WRRE ONEROUS AND THERE MIGHT BE A POSSIBILITY FOR MORE USEFUL TERMS UNDER ONE OF OUR REGULAR PROGRAMS. (THE KING DID NOT APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN TOLD BY US COMMERCIAL SUPPLIERS

THAT THERE WAS ANY DOUBT ABOUT THEIR BEING AUTHORIZED BY MUNITIONS CONTROL TO CONSUMMATE A COMMERCIAL SALE. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I DID NOT AT THIS POINT WISH TO RAISE AN ISSUE THE EFFECT OF WHICH COULD ONLY REINFORCE HIS INTEREST IN SOVIET EQUIPMENT. HOWEVER I GAVE HIM NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT ANYTHING WHICH I WAS SUGGESTING WOULD BE MORE THAN A CHECK WITH WASHINGTON TO SEE ABOUT POSSIBILITIES.)

9. FINALLY, I REMINDED KING THAT THIS WAS NOT A NEW SUBJECT -- JORDANIAN INTEREST IN SOVIET EQUIPMENT. THERE HAD BEEN OTHER CASES IN THE PAST BEFORE MY TIME IN WHICH THERE HAD BEEN SIMILAR INTEREST. THESE HAD ALWAYS BEEN RESOLVED BY TURNING TO THE US. I HOPED THAT WITH THIS IDEA IN MIND, HE WOULD NOT MAKE ANY PRECIPITATE OR HASTY DECISION ON WHAT THE SOVIETS HAD TO SAY. OUR RELATIONSHIP WAS OF SUCH LONG STANDING AND
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OF SUCH MUTUAL IMPORTANCE THAT I FELT I MUST ASK HIM BEFORE MAKING ANY DECISION TO DISCUSS THE MATTER FURTHER WITH US. HE SAID THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF MAKING A DECISION NOW. THE DELEGATION WAS ONLY EXPLORATORY AND HAD NO AUTHORITY TO MAKE ANY COMMITMENT. HE TOLD ME HE WOULD BE BACK IN TOUCH WITH US FURTHER AS MORE INFORMATION DEVELOPED. (I MADE LATTER POINTS BOTH TO REMIND HIM OF THE PAST PROBLEMS WE HAD ENCOUNTERED AND FAVORABLY RESOLVED AND ALSO TO INSURE THAT HE UNDERSTOOD OUR STRONG AND CONTINUING INTEREST IN NOT SEEING SITUATION DEVELOP UNFAVORABLY FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW.)

10. KING ADDED THE FACT THAT THERE WAS NO QUESTION IN HIS MIND ABOUT PREFERENCE FOR AMERICAN EQUIPMENT. EVEN PRESIDENT ASAD HAD TOLD HIM THAT IF THERE WAS EVER A CHOICE ANY RECIPIENT SHOULD PREFER AMERICAN EQUIPMENT.

11. COMMENT: WHILE I HAD NOT RECEIVED YOUR INSTRUCTIONS, BASIC POINTS IN PARA 1 AND LATTER PORTION OF PARA 2 HAVE BEEN MADE. AS INDICATED ABOVE, INITIAL PORTION PARA 2 WAS NOT CONVEYED AT THIS TIME. I ALSO DID NOT VENTURE TO PLACE BEFORE KING CONSIDERATIONS PARA 3 WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS, REALIZING THAT WASHINGTON WOULD WANT TO EXAMINE THIS PORTION OF THE APPROACH CAREFULLY.

12. IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT IN THIS CONTEXT, KING MAY NOW SEE PARA 3 AS A NEGATIVE RATHER THAN POSITIVE SUGGESTION, MY PRESENT BEST JUDGMENT IS THAT WE SHOULD MOVE TO PLACE THIS CONSIDERATION BEFORE CHIEF OF STAFF BEN SHAKER IN THE CONTEXT OF A GENERAL REVIEW OF

JORDANIAN ACQUISITION OF ALL TYPES OF US EQUIPMENT IN THE FUTURE AND THE ATTENDANT PERSONNEL AND TRAINING PROBLEMS, RATHER THAN TO SINGLE OUT THE HEAVY-LIFT HELICOPTERS ISSUE IN SPECIFIC TERMS.

13. I APPRECIATE YOUR PROMPT HELPFUL RESPONSE TO INITIAL INQUIRY. I BELIEVE MAJOR POINTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO KING. HOWEVER, I BELIEVE THERE IS SOME USEFULNESS IN SEEKING ANOTHER EARLY APPOINTMENT WITH HIM TO REINFORCE POINTS MADE IN PARA 1 IN PARTICULAR.

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I WOULD DO THIS ON THE BASIS THAT AFTER HAVING TALKED WITH HIM I RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS FROM WASHINGTON FROM HIGH LEVELS IN USG WHICH REITERATE THE POINTS WHICH I MADE. I WOULD DO SO FIRMLY AND WITHOUT TRYING TO AGITATE THE SITUATION, WHICH MIGHT OTHERWISE DRIVE HIM IN A DIRECTION IN WHICH WE DO NOT WISH TO SEE HIM MOVE. HE DOES NOT REACT WELL AS YOU KNOW TO PRESSURE. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO KEEP OPEN THE IDEA OF A DIALOGUE ON THIS SUBJECT WHICH MIGHT WELL HAVE TO CULMINATE WITH HIS MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON IN MARCH. END COMMENT. PICKERING

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